

Committee	Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date	19 April, 2018
Title	Grass Cutting of the Council's Open Spaces
Cabinet Member	Councillor Gareth Wyn Griffith
Purpose	To seek the Scrutiny Committee's opinion on the need to make further savings in the service.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are well aware of the reductions during the last 4 years to the budget available for maintaining the Council's open spaces. In addition to ensuring savings in the service, there have been cuts to the budget following the Gwynedd Challenge public consultation exercise in October 2015, and the full Council's decision in March 2016 to approve a series of cuts to Council services in order to address the deficit in the grant received from the Government to pay for local services.

1.2 Savings have been achieved, and budgetary cuts have been made following the Gwynedd Challenge exercise. The table below summarises the effect this has had upon the general standard of grass cutting in the Council's open spaces.

	Provision	Effect	Implemented	Savings
(i)	Rural Grass Cutting (Highway verges outside 30mph zones)	Change of frequency from 2 cuts per year to 1 (except at busy junctions and locations requiring visibility)	April 2015	£100,000
(ii)	Urban Grass Cutting (within 30mph zones)	Change of frequency from 5 cuts per year to 3	April 2016	£120,000
(iii)	Play Areas (131 in number)	Change of frequency from 8 cuts per year to 6	April 2016	£60,000
(iv)	Cemeteries (16 in number)	Change of frequency from 8 cuts per year to 6	April 2016	£60,000

1.3 A further £50,000 savings in the service is due (expected 2017/18), and has not been realized.

1.4 The purpose of this Report is to seek the Scrutiny Committee's opinion on the need for further savings.

2. CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The relevant budget for urban grass cutting and play areas is approximately £391k this year, with a further and additional £29k used for providing flower beds.
- 2.2 In order to achieve a further £50k savings, it will be necessary to consider measures such as:
- reduce the frequency of grass cutting from 3 cuts per year to 2 on the outskirts of towns and villages
 - provide less flower beds.
- 2.3 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are aware of the discontentment with the current standard of 3 annual cuts and obviously lowering the standard further will surely prove to be contentious.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked for its guidance regarding the need to achieve further savings to this service which will have an effect on the appearance of our towns and villages.